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THE CHALLENGE

The Education Improvement Act (EIA) directed the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education to develop and approve "a high school curriculum that will prepare students to be successful in the twenty-first century, including a two track high school curriculum, one for college bound and one for students entering the work force."

Adopted in 1992, the EIA envisioned that all students would pursue a purposeful plan of study. High expectations for all students, significant improvements in student achievement and increases in high school completion rates were prominent themes of the legislation.

In 1993, a High School Advisory Task Force developed a set of bold recommendations, adopted by the State Board of Education, touching all facets of the high school. The recommendations centered on a vision of the high school graduate including statements about what we want students to know and be able to do when they complete high school.

School systems implemented the *High School Policy* in the fall of 1994, and the first class of seniors graduated under its provisions in 1998. During this four-year period, the State Board of Education made several adjustments to the policy and several state agencies, working collaboratively, launched the Education Edge initiative. School-community partnerships, supported through Education Edge, represent an important means for implementing the essential elements of the policy.

The 1998 revision of the *High School Policy* added a new section on work-based learning, emphasizing strategies that have proven to be effective in promoting student learning. In 2002, the Board revised the policy to reflect changes in high school assessments.

In January 2003, the Board approved a change to *High School Policy* requiring the 2005-06 entering class of freshman to complete one of the following mathematics courses, as part of the required units for graduation: Geometry, Technical Geometry, Algebra II, or Integrated Mathematics II.

The challenge is to implement the policy fully in all high schools to ensure that all students learn to high standards and have the opportunity to transition easily to postsecondary study, as envisioned in the EIA, the Board's *Master Plan*, federal legislation, and the Tennessee P-16 initiative.¹

¹ See SBE Rule 0520-1-3-.05 and .06.

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A NEW VISION FOR TENNESSEE HIGH SCHOOLS

Meeting Changing Demands

Our schools were originally designed to meet the needs of a rural, agrarian society. At the turn of the century they adapted to meet the needs of an urban, industrial society. Now, they must change again to meet the demands of a global, information-based society.

As we approach the next century, more students than ever before need to be educated to higher levels. Students must be able to compete successfully in a job market requiring higher levels of skills, participate in our democratic system, and develop strong ethical values.

Preparing for Lifelong Learning

The high school experience must be designed so students derive the greatest possible benefit. All students, with the help of their parents and counselors, must develop focused and purposeful programs of study. We must prepare all students for postsecondary study, either in university or technical training. While all students may not enter postsecondary training immediately following high school, they must be prepared for lifelong learning.

Changing the Way Teachers Teach and Students Learn

The High School Advisory Task Force began its work by asking "What do we want students to know and to be able to do?"

After fashioning a vision of the high school graduate, the task force noted that the vision statements must be linked to teaching, curriculum standards, and assessment practices. Students must be active learners, encouraged to work with others, and supported by teachers as coaches. Teachers must use diverse strategies to engage students in learning. Faculty members must collaborate to integrate the curriculum and to foster their own continuous learning. Students must have opportunities for meaningful work-based learning.

Restructuring the High School

This policy builds on the innovative and effective reform efforts already under way in many Tennessee high schools. Some schools are implementing the High Schools That Work model developed by the Southern Regional Education Board. Others are using the principles of Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools. Several are implementing reforms based on the Paideia concept. At least one school system is implementing reform based on locally developed strategies.

What these innovations have in common is the belief that all students can learn and they can learn at higher levels.

Schools are encouraged to investigate and learn from the very promising initiatives already under way in Tennessee. While the proposed policy is far-reaching, it is practical and within our

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capability to achieve. While the state, school systems and individual schools will all share implementation responsibility, reform is focused at the school level. Putting this ambitious plan into practice will take time. But we must begin now.

Accountability

The fulfillment of the vision for Tennessee High Schools will be determined through the accountability standards approved by the State Board of Education. The degree to which the *High School Policy* has been implemented and has become an integral part of the school improvement process will be reflected in the success rate on the accountability standards.

Essential Elements for School-Wide Reform

The *High School Policy* is a logical extension of the Board's *Master Plan* as well as the Board's recently adopted policies regarding teacher education and professional development.

The policy recognizes that all of the components of comprehensive reform must be integrated. Isolated initiatives won't bring about the needed change. Ten elements—explained more fully in a subsequent section—are essential for school-wide reform:

- Core curriculum
- Two paths: university or technical
- A focused plan of study
- Active learning
- Work-based learning
- Integrated curriculum
- Extra support to meet student needs
- Assessment of learning
- School-wide improvement plan
- Professional development

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VISION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

For students to be successful in the twenty-first century, the high school experience must dramatically change. High schools must be redesigned to prepare students to be lifelong learners and, more specifically, to prepare them for either postsecondary university or technical training and employment. Above all, the high school must be centered on student learning.

The following statements reflect what students should know and be able to do as a result of their experience in high school. These statements, developed by the High School Advisory Task Force, should guide educators in making decisions about what and how to teach and also provide policymakers a basis for making decisions about curriculum, textbooks, and assessment.

1. Communications. Students will:

- a. Demonstrate mastery of concepts in the gateway examination in English language arts.
- b. Read to construct meaning from a variety of print materials.
- c. Write clearly and effectively for a variety of purposes in all subject areas.
- d. Listen actively to understand complex oral messages.
- e. Speak articulately in daily conversation and in making oral presentations in all subject areas.
- f. Analyze, by making critical judgments about and evaluating various forms of, communication.
- g. Use technology to gather, organize, and communicate information.

2. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving. Students will:

- a. Formulate questions and access information and ideas.
- b. Organize and interpret information.
- c. Make informed decisions among options.
- d. Think creatively in developing and inventing ideas, concepts, and products.
- e. Integrate knowledge by applying information from multiple subject areas in making presentations or products.
- f. Facilitate critical thinking and problem solving skills by demonstrating understanding of the basics of logic and an awareness of logical fallacies.

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3. Mathematics. Students will:

- a. Demonstrate a mastery of concepts in the gateway examination in mathematics.
- b. Read, write, and orally communicate mathematical concepts.
- c. Use various methods, including mental math, estimating, modeling, and diagrams, in solving problems.
- d. Organize, analyze, depict, and interpret data to make decisions and predictions related to real-world situations.
- e. Use appropriate tools, such as measuring instruments, calculators, and computers, to solve problems.
- f. Solve theoretical and practical problems using essential concepts of algebra, geometry, probability, and statistics.
- g. Understand the relationship between mathematics, the sciences, technology, and society.

4. Science, Technology, and Society. Students will:

- a. Demonstrate mastery of concepts in the gateway examination in science.
- b. Use scientific inquiry to pose questions, seek answers, and design solutions.
- c. Explain the relationships among the sciences, technology, and society.
- d. Understand major scientific concepts, hypotheses, and theories and their applications.
- e. Use models and scales to explain or predict the function and behavior of forces, materials, and living things.
- f. Analyze the effects of society and technology on environmental quality and generate solutions to environmental issues.

5. National and International Awareness. Students will:

- a. Use knowledge of the past to explain the present and anticipate the future.
- b. Understand the relationships among geographical, historical, economic, and cultural development.
- c. Compare economic, governmental, and political systems of the United States to those in other nations.

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- d. Demonstrate respect for the dignity, worth, and contributions of others, based on knowledge that the people of the United States are drawn from diverse cultures and are united by shared values and traditions.
 - e. Apply principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom to real-world situations.
 - f. Understand and appreciate the founding principles of our country through a study of our founders' own words.
6. Arts and Humanities. Students will:
- a. Read and evaluate literature.
 - b. Appreciate creativity and the historical and cultural context of works from the visual and performing arts and literature.
 - c. Express insights, feelings, and perceptions through creative performances or products.
7. Wellness and Fitness. Students will:
- a. Apply knowledge of the human body to make decisions related to nutrition, mental and physical health promotion, injury prevention, and disease prevention and control.
 - b. Apply knowledge to make healthy decisions related to nicotine, alcohol, and substance abuse prevention.
 - c. Develop a plan for maintaining personal fitness and health.
 - d. Demonstrate individual development in fitness and psychomotor skills promoting lifelong physical activity.
8. Career Education and Work. Students will:
- a. Explore career options, relate them to individual interests, aptitudes and skills, and develop career plans.
 - b. Understand how changes in society, technology, and the economy affect careers and require continuous learning.
 - c. Demonstrate the ability to organize resources, work with others, access and use information, understand systems, and use a variety of technologies in producing an idea or product.
 - d. Demonstrate the skills needed to obtain and maintain jobs including interviewing, problem solving, understanding and giving written and oral instructions, and working without supervision.

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9. Personal Growth and Responsibility. Students will:

- a. Exhibit truthfulness, fairness, and respect for self and others.
- b. Exhibit the self discipline and motivation needed to be a self directed lifelong learner.
- c. Work cooperatively with others as a team leader, mentor, or group member.
- d. Analyze conflict to discover methods of cooperative resolution.
- e. Appreciate and cooperate with people of different races, genders, abilities, and cultural heritages.
- f. Develop the capacity for responsible citizenship and community service.

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ELEMENTS OF SCHOOL-WIDE REFORM

1. CORE CURRICULUM

All students will have access to a rigorous core curriculum that includes challenging subject matter, emphasizes depth rather than breadth of coverage, emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving, and promotes responsible citizenship and lifelong learning. The curriculum will be tied to the vision of the high school graduate and to the *Tennessee Curriculum Standards*. Teachers, parents, and students will hold high expectations for all students. Schools will communicate high expectations to students, parents, business and industry, and the community.

Policy Implications:

- a. All students will meet the following core curriculum requirements:

English	4 units
Mathematics	3 units
Science	3 units
Social Studies	3 units
Health, Physical Fitness and Wellness	1 units

- b. The core curriculum and additional courses required for postsecondary study will be tied to the vision of the high school graduate and to the *Tennessee Curriculum Standards*. Students who enter 9th grade beginning in 1994-95 are required to earn a total of 20 units for graduation.
- c. Schools will minimize tracking of students by ability, eliminate lower level classes, and provide all students a challenging course of study.
- d. Whenever possible, and with appropriate support, students with special needs will be included in regular classes.
- e. All students are required to complete three units of mathematics. Students shall be required to achieve, by the time they graduate, at least one of the following: Algebra I, Technical Algebra (formally Math for Technology II), or Integrated Mathematics I. Students who enter high school beginning in 2005-06 will also be required to complete one of the following: Geometry, Technical Geometry, Algebra II, or Integrated Mathematics II as part of the three required units.
- f. All students will complete a course in Biology I, Biology for Technology or the equivalent in an integrated science curriculum and will complete at least one course in physical sciences. School systems may implement an integrated science curriculum in accordance with national standards.

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- g. The social studies curriculum will be consistent with national goals and with admissions requirements of Tennessee public institutions of higher education; will include the study of United States history, world history/world geography, economics and government; and will incorporate a global perspective.
- h. The health, physical fitness and wellness curriculum will integrate concepts from each of these areas and may be taught by a team of teachers from one or more teaching areas, including health, physical education, family and nutrition sciences, health sciences education and technology education. Participation in marching band and interscholastic athletics may not be substituted for this aspect of the core curriculum. Credit earned in two years of JROTC may be substituted provided the local system has complied with requirements of the State Board of Education.
- i. Computer education is not specifically listed in the core curriculum. However, TCA 49-6-1010 requires every candidate for graduation to have received a full year of computer education at some time during the candidate's educational career.

2. TWO PATHS: UNIVERSITY OR TECHNICAL

All students will pursue a focused program of study preparing them for postsecondary study in either university or technical training. While all students may not enter postsecondary training immediately following high school, they must be prepared for lifelong learning. The two paths will be flexible so a student can change from one path to the other. Students in both paths will acquire essential skills and knowledge. Students may complete both paths.

Policy Implications:

- a. Students electing the university preparatory curriculum will complete the core curriculum and courses acceptable for entrance into Tennessee's public colleges and universities, including two units of the same foreign language and one unit of fine arts. The three math units will include algebra I, algebra II, and geometry or other advanced math course.
- b. Students electing a technical preparation curriculum will complete the core curriculum and a four-unit program of study focusing on a particular technical area. Schools will have some flexibility in designing programs of study.
 - Students will have the opportunity to move directly into the postsecondary component of a Tech-Prep program. The Tech-Prep program is constructed on a 2+2 basis: two years of high school applied academic and technology courses linked to two years of college courses leading to an associate degree or technical certificate credential. There are currently 14 Tech-Prep consortia representing linkages between high schools, colleges, postsecondary vocational schools, employees and the community.
 - Students may also complete part of their program through work-based learning. During the junior or senior years a student may spend part of the day working on

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site at a business or industry with a mentor providing instruction and closely observing the student's performance.

- c. Students will be required to complete a total of 20 units, including the requirements for the university or technical curriculum plus electives. Since most high schools offer the opportunity to take at least 6 units each year, for a total of 24 units, students will actually have an opportunity to take a considerable number of electives. Students who attend high schools using block scheduling have the opportunity to take a total of 32 units.
- d. Students completing requirements for either the university or the technical curriculum will have the opportunity to graduate with honors, provided they maintain at least a 3.0 academic average. Local school systems may add additional requirements, such as requiring students to demonstrate performance of distinction in one or more areas. Schools will avoid implementing honors diploma criteria in ways that result in tracking.
- e. Schools are encouraged to provide transition opportunities at the junior or senior level that include college level course work, work-based learning and community service. This will require collaboration with community service agencies, employers, and others outside the school as well as careful coordination with emerging state and federal initiatives.

3. A FOCUSED PLAN OF STUDY

Prior to the 9th grade, all students will develop a four-year plan of focused and purposeful study. The plan will be reviewed annually and will connect the student's academic and career goals to school.

Policy Implications:

- a. When the student is in the eighth grade, the student, parent(s), and faculty advisor or guidance counselor will jointly prepare a four-year focused, purposeful plan of study.
- b. By the end of tenth grade, the student, parent(s) and school will readjust the plan to ensure the completion of the program of study and a smooth transition to postsecondary study and work.
- c. The plan of study will be reviewed annually by the student and faculty advisor or guidance counselor, and revised based on changes in the student's interests and career goals. Results of various types of assessments will also be used in adjusting the plan of study.
- d. High school and middle grades faculty will collaborate in planning curriculum and the transition between middle grades and high school.

4. ACTIVE LEARNING

Schools will design curriculum and implement instruction in ways that invite students to participate in their own learning. In this teaching and learning environment the teacher serves as

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facilitator. In both academic and technical courses, teachers will emphasize active learning strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, technology, and the application of knowledge to real life situations. Students will focus on fewer topics within courses but will engage them in greater depth.

Policy Implications:

- a. Academic and technical faculty will work together to facilitate the sharing of ideas and the use of active learning strategies.
- b. Applied academics courses, which use hands-on strategies, will be implemented in high schools statewide. Appropriate labs and staff development will be provided.
- c. Calculators will be provided for use in all mathematics courses.
- d. Technology will be used to access information, solve real life problems, and improve instruction.
- e. Schools will regularly inform parents regarding expectations of the school and new modes of learning

5. WORK-BASED LEARNING

Students in both the university and technical paths will have access to a system of structured work-based learning experiences that allows them to apply classroom theories to practical problems and to explore career options at the work site. Work-based learning experiences may include, but are not limited to, service learning, studios, laboratories, school-based enterprises, internships including clinical experiences, cooperative education, youth apprenticeship, and registered apprenticeship. The State Department of Education will provide school systems with a Work-Based Learning Guide.

Policy Implications:

- a. Structured work-based learning experiences may be paid or unpaid, may occur in a public, private, or non-profit organizations and may result in the attainment of academic credit.
- b. Training plans will ensure that student skill development is supervised and evaluated collaboratively by appropriate school and work-site personnel. The training plan will provide clear expectations for the student both at the school and the workplace.
- c. Teachers and work-site mentors (workers who supervise the students during the work-based learning experience) will collaboratively develop school experiences such as projects, journal writing, oral presentations, and demonstrations that explore industry themes and occupational issues to reinforce work-based learning.

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- d. To document learning on the work site students will demonstrate their skills, develop portfolios, produce products, participate in exhibitions, and make presentations.
- e. Students must exhibit work-readiness attitudes and skills before they enter the workplace. Students must understand how to ask questions, how to stay safe on the job, how to resolve conflicts, and how to get help regarding career decisions and planning.
- f. Students will be provided with job specific safety training at the work site. All federal and state labor laws will be observed (both state and federal labor laws are covered in the Legal Issues Guide for Work-Based Learning prepared by the State Department of Labor).
- g. School and work site staff will attend formal orientation sessions and review the Work-Based Learning Guide. Teachers will participate in internships and job shadowing at the workplace. Employers will participate in similar activities at the school site.
- h. A school site coordinator, in conjunction with a team of teachers, will recruit work site supervisors; arrange, schedule and oversee student work and job placements; and coordinate communication between partners at school and work.
- i. A mentor at the worksite will supervise each student. Firms employing groups of students will also identify a work site coordinator to supervise the work site mentors. Additionally, each student will have a school-based mentor.
- j. Schools will develop a process for evaluation and assessment to ensure work-based experiences are of high quality. Recommended templates are provided in the Work-Based Learning Guide.

6. INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

Schools will strive to integrate the curriculum, especially during the first two years. Teachers will be encouraged to integrate the curriculum both within a subject and across subjects. Teachers will be encouraged to work in teams to plan and deliver instruction.

Policy Implications:

- a. Schools are encouraged to integrate curriculum within subject areas. Examples are:
 - An integrated math curriculum consistent with NCTM standards.
 - An integrated science curriculum consistent with national standards.
- b. Schools are encouraged to integrate curriculum across subject areas. Examples are:
 - A program for 9th graders taught by a team consisting of teachers of English, math, science, social studies, and a technical subject.
 - An integrated American history and English block.

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- A math, science, and technology block.

7. EXTRA SUPPORT TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS

Teaching and learning will become more personalized as teachers work together in teams and students assume more responsibility for their own learning. Extra help and extra time will be provided for students needing it, and all students will be held to the same high standards.

Policy Implications:

- Schools will seek ways to personalize the high school experience, including the extension of middle school concepts and practices to the high school. Teachers working in teams, for example, will have the opportunity to get to know students better and meet their needs more appropriately.
- Students entering high school unprepared for high school work will be given extra help and extra time so that they can perform at grade level. Schools are encouraged to experiment with ways to accomplish this including:
 - High school readiness programs during the summer prior to 9th grade.
 - Extended time to master challenging courses, with elective credit given for the additional units.
 - Tutoring by teachers, peers or community volunteers during school, before and after school, and on weekends.
 - An accelerated program to bring 9th grade students up to grade level.
 - Computer assisted programs.
- Schools will provide extra help and time for students who experience difficulty in passing the gateway examinations in math, science and English language arts.
- The state will encourage and assist schools in developing innovative methods to provide extra help and extra time for students requiring it. A combination of federal, state, and local resources will be used for this purpose.

8. ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Assessment will reflect the concept of teaching and learning as collaboration between teachers and students. Assessment will be an integral part of instruction. In addition to paper and pencil examination, assessment will include portfolios of student's work, performances, and demonstrations. Schools are encouraged to develop graduation requirements that include demonstrations of competency.

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Policy Implications:

- a. State and local assessments will measure higher order learning and accumulated complex accomplishments rather than testing samples of discrete skills.
- b. Schools will develop and use multiple means of student assessment. Schools are encouraged to develop portfolios of student work, interdisciplinary projects and other demonstrations to document student progress throughout the four-year high school program. Many of these could be embedded in regular courses.
- c. Writing will be a part of local school assessment in all subject areas; teachers will be trained in holistic scoring. All eleventh grade students will participate in the state writing assessment.
- d. In accordance with the EIA, students will successfully complete the TCAP Competency Test. Effective with entering freshmen in the 2000-01 school year, all students must pass the gateway examinations, which replace the Competency Test.
- e. In accordance with an amendment to the EIA, students will have the opportunity to take an optional exit examination prior to graduation. Students may take one of the following: ACT, SAT, or Work Keys. No minimum score shall be required for this examination.
- f. In accordance with the EIA, the state will develop high school assessments in Math Foundations II, Algebra II, Geometry, Physical Science, Chemistry, English I and U.S. History. These assessments will be developed in accordance with national standards and *Tennessee Curriculum Standards*.

9. SCHOOL-WIDE IMPROVEMENT

Each high school will develop a shared mission and vision, school-wide goals, and a school improvement plan that is based on a needs assessment framed around the *High School Policy's* Elements of School-Wide Reform. The entire school staff will work together with parents and community members to develop an improvement plan that reflects the goals of the school, focuses on the Tennessee Curriculum Standards, links to system wide goals in the local school board's five-year strategic plan, and moves the school toward total implementation of the Elements of School-Wide Reform. In working for continuous improvement, the school will collect and use student assessment information, program evaluation information and other appropriate data.

Policy Implications:

- a. In developing school-wide goals and a school-wide improvement plan, schools are encouraged to draw upon the ideas of SREB's High Schools That Work, the Coalition of Essential Schools principles, the Paideia concept, and other ideas appropriate for a particular school. Schools are encouraged to network with other schools to share ideas and exemplary programs.

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- b. Schools and school systems are encouraged to consider the optimal size of high schools. To support student affiliation and academic achievement, high schools should consider organizing themselves into smaller units, such as schools within schools.
- c. For the continuous improvement of schools, the schools will collect and use student assessment information, such as diagnostic tests and portfolios of student work, and program evaluation information regarding student advisement, courses taken, postsecondary enrollment, and job placement.
- d. To optimize student learning and teacher planning, schools are encouraged to consider alternative ways for organizing the school day. The number of class periods during the day, variations of the length of class periods, blocking interdisciplinary classes, and rotating schedules are among the options available.

10. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school will become a learning community, with administrators, faculty, and students engaged in continuous learning. The faculty will have adequate support for professional development and time to work together to improve teaching and learning.

Policy Implications:

- a. To implement this policy, the faculty must have time to work together and adequate support for professional development.
- b. Professional development will be school focused, with needs defined at the school level and related to the school improvement plan. While the principal is responsible to ensure that professional development occurs, it will be planned and implemented collaboratively with the faculty.
- c. In providing professional development, schools may draw upon a variety of resources. State and local BEP funds and federal funds are available; state career ladder extended contract resources may be used for professional development when tied to assessment of student needs; and technical assistance can be made available by local businesses and industries.
- d. Schools may experiment with scheduling to create time for teams to work together and for larger faculty groups and the entire faculty to work together. If 32-unit block scheduling is used, the school must provide professional development so that teachers learn new ways of teaching 90 minute classes. Faculty meetings may be used for discussion of instructional issues instead of announcements.
- e. Schools will provide mentors to all beginning faculty members.

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APPENDIX A HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORY TASK FORCE

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APPENDIX B

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